

# **The body: the illusion of perfection**

**by**

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## **ABSTRACT**

In contending that sections of Western society seek to conform to the myth of the perfect body image, reconstructing the exterior so much that we no longer recognize our true selves, I am making a statement that goes against the classical beliefs of the anatomically perfect human form. In doing this I question society's devotion to ideas associated with the beautiful.

Two decisive eras, the Classical and the Hellenistic altered the perception of the human form to the present day. I have directed my attention to artists who broke the constraints of these classical traditions of what was conventionally considered beautiful. Some who have challenged the myth of beautiful perfection are Antony Gormley, Janine Antoni, Shelley Wilson, Ron Mueck, Egon Schiele and Duane Hanson. Their work invoke preoccupations with ordinary and emotional themes relating to body image: teenagers suffering from eating disorders, suppressed issues of cosmetic surgery, habitual themes of isolation, mortality and doctrines on the mundane in suburban culture. These impact on my art visually and conceptually.

In my artwork I am endeavoring to personify physical alteration: the multiple transformations that some undergo to be noticed in the crowd; how effortless it becomes to alter physical appearance and begin again. The material I use is latex with its resemblance to skin and so visually compatible to the concept I am endeavoring to impart: the constant physical alteration in an attempt to be accepted. Hyper-real body parts bought together in an installation present themes of relentless change, volume and satisfaction or discomfort with outward appearance.

Body image and image of the body is all encompassing and unavoidable and will always be a part of our lives. It has become inherent in contemporary culture. The project illustrates the consequences of adhering to the classical archetype of perfection: the chronic reshaping of our physical exterior. It is narrated through my own experience in submitting to this dogma; the relentless struggle with my physical appearance and the reconstructions I have undergone in an attempt to be noticed.

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## INTRODUCTION

My obsession with body image has formed a significant part in my life. Both body image and images of the body have influenced how I perceive one's self and my self, psychologically and physically.

In the context of this project I define body image as the impetus and outcomes for extreme physical transformations that some individuals undergo to be noticed in the crowd. It is my contention that a significant fraction of society seeks to conform to the Western myth of the perfect body image, reconstructing the exterior so much that we no longer recognize our true selves. The myth of physical perfection is all encompassing and a social trap. Through this project I have made a statement that goes against the classical practices and beliefs in the anatomically correct human form. I have also questioned society's devotion to ideas associated with the beautiful, with physical perfection as an indication of the soul.

However much I refer to the implications of body image in Western society this project has always been about my own perception and experience of the concept of perfection. Through my art I am attempting to convey the ramifications of conforming to the myth of the perfect body.

I am hoping to find resolution in my search for individuality so that I no longer need to be dependent on this false conception of image. Through the writing and making process I am endeavoring to personify physical change; the multiple transformations we undergo, while no longer recalling our true selves. How effortless it becomes to alter our body image and begin again. We discard our now outmoded skins so

easily. I compare this routine to the daily ritual of adorning ourselves in clothing, only to remove at night and to animals shedding skins to start fresh.

Using skin-like material apparently sloughed from the body in privacy of my room, the project encapsulates physical development and the countless transformations I have undergone, on the assumption that by reconstructing the exterior that I would embody the perfect body image developed Western society.

In Chapter One I have directed my focus on the myth and origin of body image. I am concerned how both topics have ebbed through time and the impact they have had on contemporary culture and the creative establishment. Both are intrinsic to how man perceives their physical self. I have also given reference to the periods preceding contemporary culture, which has had a significant influence from our predecessors pertaining to body image.

Before identifying with the existing issues of body image I felt it necessary to be familiar with why the human form was employed by our predecessors. By understanding the past I feel it has given me a better insight into existing issues of body image. I have referred to two important periods in Greek history- the Classical and the Hellenistic, thought to be the founders of ideas associated with beauty.

At present artists that depict the human figure in art have been receptive to these two significant periods, used to inspire, imitate or make a statement that abandons classical Greek principles. I have then concentrated on more recent artists who have broken the constraints of classical traditions of elucidating the flawless. These are the artists that have instilled the conceptual direction that I have taken now. The art conveys the consequences of conforming to these principles. It is anti-perfection.

In the second chapter I have revealed some delicate secrets of my life, secrets that have affected my personal development but must now be shared. This chapter is integral to the project; it will exemplify who and what I have become. I touch upon two inter-related areas of research: the social and psychological implications of body image to assist me to understand individual and personal behavior and how identity is essential in the formation of a community's social mores also how the environment (social, cultural, lineage, peers) can influence individual development.



Chapter Three documents the various processes I have undertaken that have aided in the final outcome of the project: material, space, scale, technique and visual aesthetics.

What was significant to the outcome of the project was my transition from clay to a foreign material as latex. The reason behind this change was that I felt clay was too rigid, becoming unapproachable. This had eventuated from my previous project. It is essential for the viewer to be able to engage and interact with the imagery and clay did not achieve the resolve I was aiming. I have also documented the myriad materials I trialed to reach the resolve of using latex.

The work has progressed from my customary practice of a literal representation of the body to an ambiguous approach in the delineation of the human form. It is articulated through method of installation, a technique of presentation I was unfamiliar with at the beginning of the project.

In the concluding chapter two important components are resolved. My first task was to unearth some answers to why I have such low self-worth of my physical guise. Secondly; are there any solutions to the quandary of body image or is it an incessant issue?

I have discovered that body image and image of the body is all encompassing and unavoidable and will always be a part of our lives. You cannot suppress the doctrine however you have the opportunity to choose whether you want to comply or disregard, to realize it is no longer necessary to pursue the physical archetype of Greek perfection. My aspiration is to put a halt to these multiple sheddings, to have a space devoid of fragments, the antithesis of my former self.

## **CHAPTER 1**

### **ORIGIN**

Two sociological trends that have had a historical impact on human development are body image and image of the body, issues that have been instilled into contemporary culture. The concept of the image of the body is the ideal state of the human body

as defined by ancient Greek tradition. This is a culturally defined ideal. The ideal body image became a reflection of personal order and disorder. The well-proportioned human figure was generally associated with affluence, success and social acceptability. Those who did not fit the classical Greek archetype could suffer intolerance. (Grogan, 2008, p. 10). Michael Gill has argued: 'Obesity was scorned; good looks praised in poems and public eulogies' (Gill, Michael, 1989, p. 24). Furthermore, Seymour Fisher has defined body image as a psychological experience directly related to an individual's feelings and attitudes towards their own body (Cleveland and Fisher, 1958, p. x). Body image: an individual's perception of their own physical state, but often more specifically an awareness of the degree to which their physicality conforms to the ideal body tradition. Regrettably, classical Greek ideals of the human body have become the underlying benchmark for the attainment of a positive body image in contemporary society. An ideal archetype of the perfect physical exterior has subsequently developed, although it often proves to be unobtainable. Such is the importance placed on individual physicality in contemporary society, that the desire to be physically beautiful can often take precedence over all other concerns.

How far does one need to look historically where physical perfection was not valued as integral in human development? Were the Ancient Greeks the protagonists with their ideologies of perfection or does it predate this influential civilization? In order to understand pre-existing issues of body image and image of the body I feel it is necessary to understand their inception and how intrinsically important these ideas were to our artistic predecessors.

Throughout western history of human creativity artists have utilized the human form to articulate a narrative, depicting significant periods and experiences in our lives: freezing the body, capturing moments or embalming a memory.



Figure 1: Praxiteles, *Hermes and Dionysus*, 343-330 BC (Hellenistic Period), marble.

The primary purpose of freezing specific moments was to immortalize gods and the heroic, to celebrate their achievements or to be worshipped. The statue of Hermes and Dionysus (Fig. 1) got its notoriety for it was regarded as an emblem of Olympia. It was associated with the Olympic games and a temple to worship their deities (Durando, 1997, 143). Immortalizing historical and religious icons in this way helps to give society a sense of purpose, patriotism, solidarity and unity in life. While the human form continued to be employed as a symbolic vehicle to memorialize religious concerns, it was also an important subject in the expression of fertility and eroticism.

Traditionally the figure in art has been characterized as being either robust or effeminate in order to give the viewer more of an intimate relationship with the depiction or what the artist is trying to communicate. I believe the observer has naturally a more personal connection to the human form in art in comparison to other subjective matter as landscape and still life; this is due to physical familiarity. The myth of Pygmalion is a useful model for viewer interaction. It is an analogy that illustrates the connection that the viewer can have with the human figure in art. It tells the fable of King Pygmalion and the sculpture Galatea. It was so realistically

sculptured by Pygmalion that he had become consumed with infatuation. Aphrodite, goddess of love, took pity and granted the king a wish that gave Galatea the gift of life (Fig. 2). Galatea was so realistically made it was receptive even to the sculptor.



Figure 2: Jean-Leon Gerome, *Pygmalion and Galatea*, 1890, oil on canvas.

Artist Daniel Art Johnson conceived that the viewer is more responsive to figurative art.

Johnson also believed as a spectator we share two things in common with art that adopts the figure: a physical shell and universal idiosyncratic behavior as body language (Johnson, 2010). Johnson's convincing arguments are my reasoning of employing the human form as subject matter, where I use familiarity to aid the viewer. The hyper-real fragments of the human figure elicit an emotive response that is congruent to Johnson's philosophy in his artistic practice.

Gender has also been a significant factor in the representation of the human form, conveying different inherent connotations. Generally the male form is exemplified as masculine in a way that is suggestive of strength, athleticism and aggression.



Figure 3: Michelangelo Buonarroti, *David*, 1504, marble.

This was visibly evident in Michelangelo's *David* (1504) (Fig. 3), the Renaissance personification of what the classical Greek civilization held dear in relation to the human form in art. Through this reference to the Classical, *David* could have been seen as an accurate representation of a man but also a reminder of the Greeks' concern with improving the physique of the male and their performance as athletes (Gill, 1989, p. 3).

The female however is represented with physical attributes that personify her as typically beautiful, fertile, submissive and nurturing (Grogan, 2008, p. 16). They were the embodiment of beauty (Gill, 1989, p. 3). These cultural stereotypes are therefore used as tools to enable the exploration of specific themes in art, thus providing the artist and the observer a familiar common language to identify with.



Figure 4: Michael Childers, *Tahitian Lovers*, 1998, photograph (Olley, 2000).

*Tahitian Lovers* (Fig. 4) displays similar qualities that epitomize these Classical gender stereotypes: the chiseled features of the male and the sensual hourglass physique of the female with their sexual wiles.

My present project does not rely on any specific gender or non-verbal language nor does it cater for a particular sexual category to view the project, but it does always reference the obsession with the Classical.

So, before identifying existing issues of body image and image of the body I felt it was necessary to be familiar with the why the human form was employed by our predecessors. The concept of body image and image of the body has influenced the historic development of art from the time of the ancient Greeks. The most influential chapters recorded in Greek history were manifested in the Classic and Hellenistic periods.



Figure 5 (left) and Figure 6 (right): Cycladic figures, 3<sup>rd</sup>-2<sup>nd</sup> millennia BC, marble.

Prior to these periods the portrayal of the human form was delineated by a more distinct uncomplicated style. (Figs 5, 6) This was an approach that could undeniably be described as abstract.

The Greeks are regarded as the architects of ideas associated with the ideal human form. To match these physical qualities was considered the epitome of beauty. 'What is beautiful is good' (Grogan, 2008, p. 11). Furthermore uniformity of the human figure conveyed an air of confidence in the body (Gill, 1989, p. 3-5). To be socially accepted you must possess these characteristics: those who did not fit the classical archetype of the human form would face prejudice. The non-conformists were regarded as the antithesis of the Greek physical perfection typecast as less active, unintelligent, lacking any self-discipline more self-indulgent, not successful, unpopular and unattractive' (Grogan, 2008, 10). I pose the question to you, what do you define as physically beautiful; socially and artistically? There is no accurate assessment of what is beautiful and what is unappealing. It all comes down to subjectivity. To some who have viewed Egon Schiele's *Nude Girl with Crossed Arms* (1910) (Fig. 7) or *Erwin Olsen* (1910) (Fig. 8) these images may seem like grotesque interpretations of the human body.



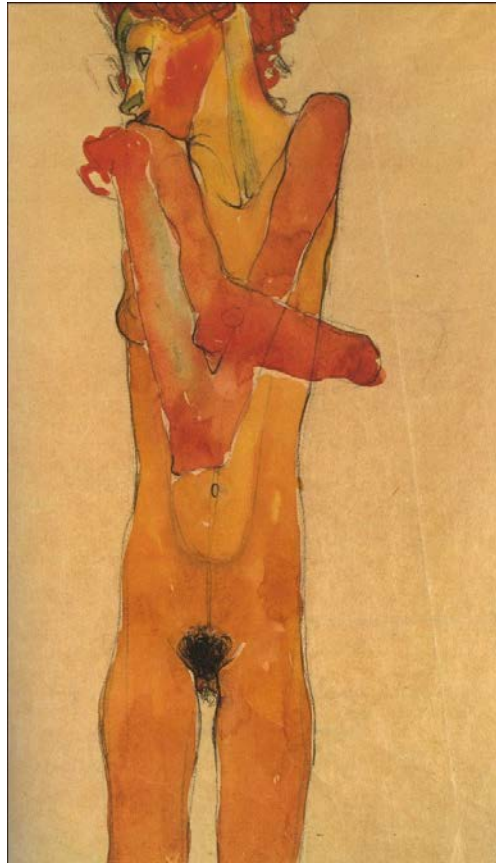


Figure 7: Egon Schiele, *Nude Girl with Crossed Arms*, 1910.

I find them beautiful and am enticed by the melancholy nature of the portraits but also of his portrayal of the darker side of life. Schiele was fascinated with the decline and decay of the world (Whitford, 1981, 54). The well-proportioned *David* captures this not at all.





Figure 8: Egon Schiele, *Erwin Olsen*, 1910.

The analogy of aesthetics in art is consistent with how western society treats the human form. Contemporary physical icons such as Angelina Jolie and Brad Pitt are not always distinguished as appealing or an archetype to strive for.

It was also assumed that the historical transformation into a more figurative style originated in Greece around 300 BC. I concur with Furio Durando's premise that Greek art has been a 'constant point of reference' for western civilization. Durando also puts forward: 'Classicism was thus placed on a pedestal as the absolute model for Western art and culture' (Durando, 1997, p. 102).

It has almost become a customary practice for a percentage of the populace to comply with Greek ideals within our contemporary culture.

I am one of many that have used Greek art as a point of reference and placed them on a pedestal. No matter how much I dispute classical Greek ideals in contemporary Western culture and judge others that conform to them I have chosen to embrace this dogma into my personal development and art.

Greek culture was directly influenced by contact with Asia. To some degree this contact allowed for the reinvigoration of their civilization in both science and art (Durando, 1997, p. 14). In terms of art, the abstract geometric style that was conventionally used was replaced by a more naturalistic figurative approach. This

was a new trend for the Greeks and would influence the wider course of Western art to the present day. After the transmission of these new ideas, customary themes as religion, deities, history and culture were still portrayed but the emphasis shifted into a more dramatic human expression of psychological and spiritual well-being. The philosopher Protagoras believed humans to be the ultimate sources of information. This was particularly for him in relation to the manner in which human expression and beauty were illustrated (Russell, 1945, 151). Jonathan Glover adopted a similar opinion by insisting that the viewer has a role in how they discern themselves and how they want to be seen (Glover, 1988, pp. 80-81). Therefore in regards to perceptions towards, and the use of, the image of the human form, there is a direct cultural lineage from ancient Greece to modern Western civilisation. The general public still responds today to our shared artistic and cultural heritage in regards to the popular portrayal of the human form.

The Greek tradition has been a critical influence on the way artists work with the human form. It represents a cultural touchstone, which forces artists to either imitate or subvert, but never ignore. In previous projects I have applied principles of perfection in body image that were employed by the Greeks, using these cultural periods as a point of reference in my work: celebrating the classical Greek human form or resisting physical perfection.



Figure 9: Evan Williams, *self-portrait: peeling of skin*, latex, photograph

My present project has made a social statement that contests Classical practices and beliefs in the beautifully perfect human form: it is 'anti-perfection'. This personifies extreme physical change, the countless reconstructions that some endure in attempting to achieve traditional Greek perfection. It becomes an effortless, habitual process to alter our bodies and begin again (Fig. 9). Ironically by undergoing all these multiple physical changes there is no longer any recollection of our true selves.

The Renaissance artists of the 15<sup>th</sup> -17<sup>th</sup> centuries were inspired by both the Classic and Hellenistic periods (as has already been shown in discussion of Michelangelo's *David*). There was an observable resurgence of Greek and Roman interpretations of beauty in the human figure. It represented a general reawakening of interest in classical wisdom, enlightenment, literature and art. Artists of the Renaissance embraced the realistic embodiment of the human form articulated by the Greeks. The system formulated by the Greek philosopher, Pythagoras, was most regularly applied. He devised a set of mathematical guidelines on proportion, perspective, symmetry and composition in the representation of the human form. Pythagoras reasoned that if the portrayal of man or self are physically proportioned to these principles it then represented perfection. Alternatively if these physical parameters were broken (for instance, if limbs were asymmetrical) then perfection was unobtainable.

Pythagoras postulated, 'that the human body with arms and legs extended fits into the perfect geometric forms, the circle and the square' (Place, nd). The Roman architect Marcus Vitruvius Pollio applied principles developed by Pythagoras. He deemed that the design of the built environment should be derived from the uniformity of man because the human body is a model of perfection. From these theories Vitruvius wrote ten books on architecture collectively known as *De Architectura libri decem* (c. 25 BC). His concepts, as published, revolutionized the early Renaissance in relation to art, philosophy and architecture itself. Leonardo Da Vinci frequently used this process and his *Vitruvian Man* (1513) (Fig.10) was a conscious tribute to Vitruvius and Pythagoras.

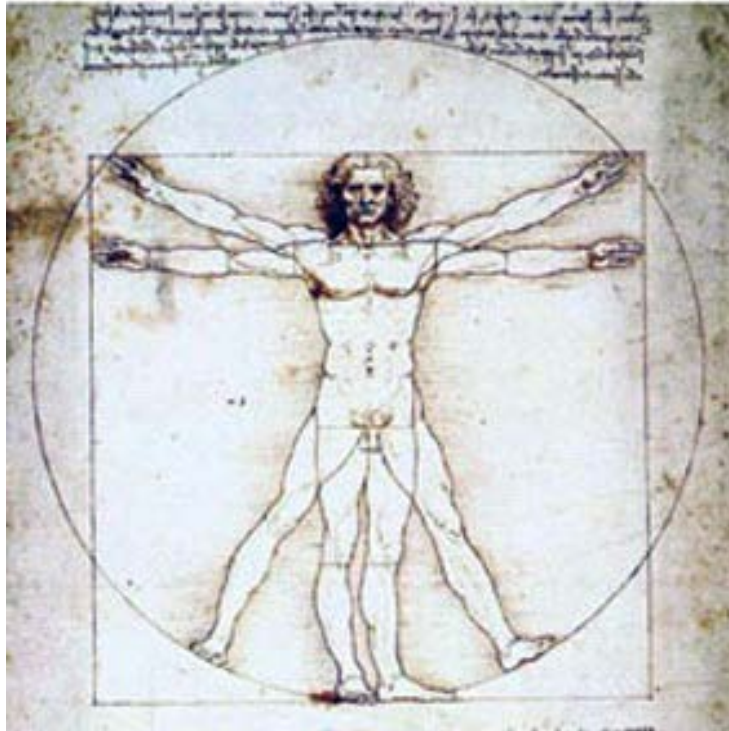


Figure 10: Leonardo Da Vinci, *Vitruvian Man*, 1513, pen and ink

*Vitruvian Man* typifies the domination of classical Greek ideals of perfection and beauty. I have always seen this image as a beautifully perfect representation of man but also a psychological trap to admire and pursue. So this project symbolizes my personal experience to Pythagoras's theories of physical parameters of proportion and the imperfect human figure, as later illustrated by Vitruvius and Da Vinci. When I look in the mirror all I see is this flawed being that does not resemble the Pythagorean formula of the perfectly symmetrical human form. I just want to tear off every physical blemish and start afresh.

I am convinced that the idea of the perfectly symmetrical *Vitruvian Man* and Pythagoras's principles of proportion will be continually used as gauges what is 'appealing in society'. I have often questioned not only why some have chosen to embrace these principles with such conviction but also what makes these principles "gospel". Or more importantly, why have I? The all encompassing Greek ideals have become so inherent in contemporary culture it is not difficult to conceive why some desire them. I feel I will be judged and ostracized for not fitting the Vitruvian mold.

Even though I revere the techniques and themes explored by the Greeks in the delineation of the human form, I share a connection with artists that have chosen to ignore the traditional principles and themes of perfection.

Throughout recent history there have been a number of artists who have broken the constraints of classical traditions contesting what was conventionally considered beautiful. These artists did not discern the human form as this perfectly structured entity that exemplified beauty and masculinity. Artists who have concentrated on ordinary and emotional themes that challenged the myth of the beautifully perfect include: Auguste Renoir, Janine Antoni, Shelley Wilson, Antony Gormley, Ron Mueck, Egon Schiele, and Duane Hanson. Their work invokes the following preoccupations: portrayal of female teenagers suffering from eating disorders, suppressed issues of cosmetic surgery, habitual themes of isolation, mortality and doctrines on the mundane in suburban culture.

This selection of artists has been significant to my art – from technical, visual aesthetics and conceptual possibilities. To the naked eye the inspiration this group of artists has given can be seen subtly applied to the project.

Of the artists who challenge the myth of beautiful perfection and represented the figure in a less nostalgic manner Shelley Wilson is the artist who influenced the new direction I have taken in this current theme. My present project follows a similar path to Shelley Wilson's *Female Puberty and a Search for an Identity* – 1998 (Wilson, nd) (Fig. 11) that also records specific physical moments.



Figure 11: Shelley Wilson, *Female Puberty and a Search for an Identity*, 1998, mixed, media, dimension variable.

Congruent to Wilson the project illustrates the physical and psychological repercussions of conforming to the Greek myth of image of the body and body image. Although Wilson's installation concentrates on similar concepts but our approaches are visually quite distinct. Wilson's style is akin to my original idea that only documented partial elements of physical change and individuals that suffer from poor body image. I have now expanded on the initial plan and the limited imagery conveyed by Wilson in *Female Puberty and a Search for an identity*.



Figure 12: Evan Williams, *Self-Portrait: Evolution 1*, 2010, photograph





Figure 13: Evan Williams, *Self-Portrait: Evolution 2*, 2010, photograph



Figure 14: Evan Williams, *Self-Portrait: Evolution 3*, 2010, photograph

*Evolution 1-3* (Figs 12-14) was a recording moments of physical change. The three images are only partial elements of the original idea. It was a narrow concept that needed to be developed.

The human form as subject matter has been a constant in my art. There are several reasons why I favor the human form. Foremost I believe the observer has a personal connection to the human form in art on the account of the physical familiarity. When confronted with familiar facial gestures and body language I believe the viewer can find it easier to relate. The figure in art is ideal to convey mixture of temperaments, rendering an emotion tangible even though the work is devoid of words.

E.H. Gombrich stated art should be undemanding and should be unambiguous to interpret. 'Works of art have been traditionally praised precisely of 'only lacking voice', in other words, for embodying everything of real life except speech' (in Hinde, 1975,

p. 55). The human body exemplifies the essence of those attributes described by Gombrich. The human form in art will always be employed as a receptacle to illustrate an eclectic array of non-verbal emotions. This is clearly evident in Ron Mueck's hyper-real sculpture. As unnerving as Mueck's imitations are Susanna Greeves argued the sculptures had the capacity to provoke a response ranging from emotions, experiences, mundane and profound: childhood, childbirth and parenthood, the aging and death of a parent (Greeves, 2006, p. 34). What is disappointing is that I have only viewed *Pregnant Women* (2002) (Fig. 15).



Figure 15: Ron Mueck, *Pregnant Women*, 2002, mixed media

There was however a strong desire to have physical contact but there was uncomfortable awkwardness. I would never liken my art to the works of Mueck but there is one particular aspect of his sculptures that I am drawn to that has been integrated into the project: the conflicting reaction when you are confronted with the latex fragments. There is a morbid inquisitiveness to reach out and handle the hyper-real body parts but there is always apprehension. Finally; the human form is an appropriate subject matter to explore the nature of human development (body image and image of the body) that shares an interconnected relationship. Ideas associated with human development will always mirror itself on the human body making it a



valuable vessel to employ. It is a topic that has influenced contemporary Western culture and more importantly myself. It has governed how I discern my own physical exterior.

The unrelenting classical Greek ideals of body image and image of the body will always play a function in contemporary Western society; socially, culturally and psychologically. To attempt to prevent it is also unachievable because it so interconnected within our lives. What is most significant; classical Greek ideologies will never cease and continue to ebb through time. These will always influence the way individuals perceive their outward appearance, which has the ability to manipulate human development. Until I recognize that ideas that relate to body image and image of the body are not vital to human development my life will be in an infinite loop. I wait for the day when these will no longer impinge on my human development.

## **CHAPTER 2.**

### **PSEUDO PERFECTION**

I am personally obsessed with body image and image of the body, habitually monitoring my weight for fear of becoming overweight. When standing in front of the mirror all I see before me is this disproportionate shape that does not conform to classical Greek ideals of the human form in Western society. The disjunction between the mirror and exterior world has the capacity to influence the perception of one's outward appearance. Seymour Fisher claimed by scrutinizing ones own reflection their reaction can be somewhat perplexed by what is in front of them; it was like being 'face to face with an unknown, somehow alien person'. Confronting the foreign imprint of self was like standing in front distorted mirror and will 'defensively 'look away' (Fisher, 1974, pp. 4-14). In *Subjectivity: Theories of Self From Freud To Haraway* (2002) Nick Mansfield shows Jacques Lacan combining ideas formulated by Freud as supporting Fisher's argument of the relationship between the physical and subconscious self. Lacan labels it the 'mirror stage', a

critical stage in human development that occurs during the early stages of infancy. Prior to the mirror stage the infant will not distinguish its physical and psychological self as an entity autonomous from the external world (environment). The sensory world of the child is all felt to be part of one continuous, limitless being; interconnected with the organic and inorganic world.

According to Mansfield (2002) Lacan stated that the infant was unable to truly experience its body, physically and psychologically, as its own until the 'mirror stage' begins to manifest later in its life. The sense of 'mirror stage' is the most crucial defining moments of the child, claims Lacan, where the infant for the first time understands that they are separate from the external world and discovers the true nature of self. However there are impediments that the child must overcome.

As a juvenile we have an unfamiliar perspective of the body when confronted with our reflection. Lacan argued that a person's vision is limited; the eyes could only provide us with disconnected flashes of our anatomy. Lacan felt that the mirror was able to compensate for this and that you were no longer separated from the outside world (Mansfield, 2002, p. 42).

However much the mirror compensates for viewing aspects of the body it can have adverse repercussions. A number of the populace in Western societies are far more concerned with physical appearance when confronted with one's own reflection. The knee jerk response when confronted with this detached unfamiliar human form is to tear it off and begin again, a process of physical change.

The disconnectedness the child experiences with its external self can manifest in adulthood. In scrutinising one's own reflection, it seems unfamiliar and distressing to look upon. There is uncertainty when our bodies do not mirror the perfect physical profile of the external world. It compels some to fabricate a new façade.

The impetus for why some individuals see their physical semblance as alien in front of the mirror is because there is a high expectation to comply with particular elements of the external world: the embodiment of classical Greek ideals of the human body. The external world (environment) can dictate one's perception of self. Mansfield argued that the subject self assimilates knowledge in the exterior world

(Mansfield, 2000, p. 41). The all-encompassing ideas of body image and image of the body of the exterior world can be problematic to try and achieve.

These are dilemmas I face everyday. I find looking at my reflection an uncomfortable and disheartening performance, I am unsure whether it is truly my reflection that I am looking at. When I look in the mirror I want to fit the Pythagorean and Vitruvian paradigm. It is disheartening on a personal level, when I realize that I don't and cannot live up to this level, yet I still attempt to pursue it. However much I change my outward appearance I will always find another flaw when I look in the mirror.



Figure 16: Evan Williams, self-portrait 2: peeling of skin, latex, photograph

The continuous tearing of skin is done while always hoping the one beneath is an improvement (Fig. 16). Throughout my adult life I have been seeking an identity to call my own but I have been indoctrinated to believe in this superficial exterior, losing my uniqueness. I have this synthetic conception in my head that the only means to be accepted or noticed is to be physically beautiful. Erik Erikson presupposed that some might fashion an exterior to suit the environment we inhabit. 'He looks for models by which to measure himself, and seeks happiness to resemble them' (Erikson, 1980, p. 19). For some there is an urgency to have a sense of belonging, to feel that they are a part of something meaningful. Unfortunately these archetypes that some aspire towards are taken from classical Greek ideals, giving Western society a distorted perspective of how one should regard the human body, of self perception and perception of other.

The intimate subject matter in regards to my own personal issues regarding body image and image of the body is essential to the project. It illuminates the intent of the installation: multiple physical change, perception of self and perfect body archetype. Social and cultural implications of conforming to ideas associated with perfect body image and image of the body is significant to the project however it is my own personal experience and response to the ideals that is the most significant to the project. The multiple fragments discarded through the space exemplify the incessant transformations, I have attempted to attain physical perfection.

Whenever I feel I do not fit the classical Greek mold of the perfect body image all I want to do is just tear the now redundant skin off and begin afresh. Regrettably from all the reconstructions, I have forgotten my former self.

As surveyed in the previous chapter the history of Western art, even before photography, served the purpose of representing, creating, encouraging the ideal body image.

Jeffery Deitch claimed in contemporary culture that a number of the populace no longer rely upon the classical Greek motifs of the human form for physical inspiration, but instead rely on the body image as perpetuated by various social agencies, particularly the media such as film, television, magazines and the internet (Deitch, 1992, p. 2). Today's new benchmark to strive towards is a body similar to Brad Pitt (Fig. 17). Those with celebrity status are put up on a pedestal and their activities are scrutinized as much as they are imitated.

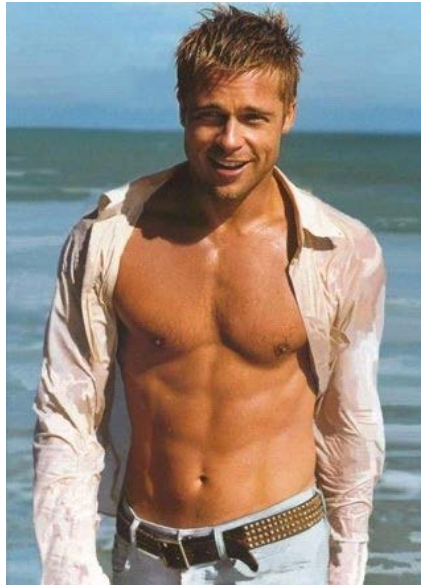


Figure 17: Brad Pitt, publicity still, 2010.

Deitch insists that 'media models of self-construction will increasingly be likely to be taken from celebrities and other media models' (Deitch, 1992, p. 2). Switch on the television or pick up a magazine and there will articles or images pertaining to body image from achieving the perfect body, facial cream to conceal your age, or the top ten celebrity bodies and their dietary habits. It is all encompassing and difficult to evade. It can be so frustrating to watch the hegemonic hold the media has over western culture, manipulating the way one engaged with their physical appearance.

The means of physical development has been revolutionized but the psychological desire to refashion body image has not dissipated. Deitch infers customary practices of diet and exercise have become antiquated process and the new regime of altering your physical exterior is through surgical reconstruction (Deitch, 1992, p. 7). The 'natural' look then has long been superseded by the pursuit of designer bodies.



Figure 18: *Obsessed with beauty: Jocelyn Wildenstein*, 2011

It has now become an accepted practice in contemporary culture to cosmetically construct a series of new veneers, erasing a physical flaw or to conceal your aging body. For a number of the populace of Western society it does not stop at removing just one blemish from the exterior. It becomes an obsession to physically alter your outward appearance through reconstructive surgery. Jocelyn Wildenstein (Fig. 18) is the epitome of cosmetic surgery addiction: she did not know when to stop.

Erik Erikson postulated it was the industrial revolution was the reason behind the modification of traditional means of education in psychological and physical development. Erikson proposed that 'the expansiveness of civilization, together with its stratification and specialization, force children to base their ego models on shifting, sectional and contradictory prototypes' (Erikson, 1980, p. 21). Deitch himself later labeled it the 'artificial evolution' (Deitch, 1992, p. 1). At present there are medical advancements and shortcuts that accentuate your physical exterior. Ironically they are continually altering, making last week's redundant. It becomes problematic to fashion an individual identity because society is confounded by ever-changing ideals and formulas in trying to reach physical perfection.

In modern western society, there is an intense pressure on all members of society to not just accept but to strictly conform to the physical ideal. However the pursuit of physical conformity through reconstructive surgery does not guarantee its achievement and it can often prove to be psychologically and occasionally physically damaging, as it is unobtainable.

The reasons why people belonging to western culture are so eager to conform are clearly numerous. Seymour Fisher contended that the stigma associated with such low self-worth would eventually drive us to 'camouflage and reshape' our bodies' (Fisher, 1974, p. xii). I can empathize with the social pressures to embrace ideals of physical perfection with low self-worth who are compelled to alter their outward appearance. All they desire is to be noticed.

The struggle to conform to the current ideal body image is often an unobtainable goal. The difficulty is when one is constantly reshaping their outward appearance, they will always discovering another imperfection that has to be corrected. It could be the most microscopic and insignificant of physical anomalies, but to some with self-doubt about their physical appearance it is seen a flaw. This is sometimes manifested in cosmetic surgery addiction (Bordo, 2003, p. xx). When we are unable to emulate the archetype we go to drastic measures to achieve it, prompting physical mental illnesses as anorexia nervosa, bulimia, body Dysmorphia and cosmetic surgery addiction (Fig. 19).



Figure 19: Man with anorexia, 2010

I will not take pity or judge the people who suffer these afflictions because I am one of them, evident in unconventional dieting that I have pursued to attempt to attain physical perfection.

It can be argued that the emerging Western physical ideal has been detrimental to alternative cultures. There are a number of cultures where body image was

considered an alien notion or discounted. In central Africa who celebrated the voluptuous woman. The Fijians were comfortable with their bodies and proud of their curves. The Muslim faith insisted that merging the human form into art and religion would tempt followers of the Prophet to idolatry and the Chinese condemned any focus on body image. It is believed the proliferation of Western principles transpired in the last two decades. This has been facilitated by the increasing availability of and utilization of, electronic media. Ironically the imagery being marketed is not even tangible. It has been either enhanced through a computer or accentuated by an airbrush.

Have we become so trusting we accept this as real? It is quite perplexing why some are compelled to conform to western rhetoric. While tracing the hegemonic trend, Susan Bordo notes that while it is observable, the extent of the western influence is not fully understood (Bordo, 2003, p. xx).

There has traditionally been an additional stigma attached to men who are concerned with their physical appearance. There is a popular misconception for men in western culture that they should not be as concerned with their physical appearance as women.

There was a period in history where the male had an 'I don't care attitude' to their physical appearance and to pay attention to how they look was labeled effeminate. However this carefree attitude was momentary. Classical Greek ideals began to emerge again in the eighties.

Calvin Klein was seen as a protagonist behind the rebirth of the classical Greek male body. Klein's clothing line was not just seen as product to wear but now it implied sex appeal through its association with the body (Fig. 20).





Figure 20: Calvin Klein advertisement, 2010.

His advertisements that exploited the male model told all men they too could have a body like this.

Classical Greek ideals are unrelentingly present and will always play a significant role in our lives, but today in contemporary culture there is now alternative means to convey the idea of physical perfection. There is a physical expectation for the male to live up to, thus putting psychological pressure on how one perceives their outward appearance. Males are forced to repress these emotional issues and many suffer in silence. This is the result of being taught at a young age that expressing emotion is seen as weak and that is not masculine. 'Men don't get eating disorders'. 'You should put-up-or-shut-up', or 'Real men don't cry' (Morgan, 2008, p. 50). John Morgan felt these attitudes were deeply imbedded in Western culture. As a young man it has been difficult to address my own issues of body with anyone because of the stigma, encountering the prejudices Morgan describes.

Before I found an avenue to divulge personal details of my life it was difficult to address the problems I am facing at present. I felt vulnerable about how much I was going to verbalize to the public. Rather than unhealthily repressing these problems, I have found the best solution is to articulate it is through my art. I have imparted intimate details of myself but I find it quite a cathartic performance.

## CHAPTER 3.

### CONSTRUCTION

Using the human form as subject matter for this project I felt it was important to select and use a material that best suited the ideas that I was researching. My first objective was to trial a variety of materials that could express physical change: the constant reconstructions of my outward appearance.

Initially, the central theme of the project was to document physical changes brought about through diet and exercise that depicted a metamorphosis of physical and psychological wellbeing (Fig. 21). I would then record this evidence of change through photography and body casting.

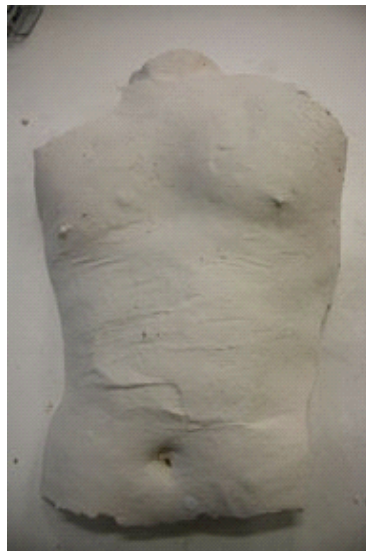


Figure 21: Evan Williams, ceramic body cast, 2009

The process of physical change was paramount to a project exploring body image, but the original idea did not get to the crux of the subject matter. Visually it had become too literal and cliché, also I felt it had become impersonal.

Clay has invariably been the material that I have used for previous projects. For the current project I saw clay as an unsuitable material to be employed.



Figure 22: Evan Williams, *Body Language: The Disclosure of Levels of Self-Esteem*, 2008, raw clay, 30cm x 30cm.

Clay was too rigid and unapproachable for viewer interaction (Fig. 22). For me, it is essential for the viewer to be able to engage and interact with the present project and clay did not achieve this. I was desiring the contrary – a more personal engagement – particularly when I aimed to merge the human form into the project. But it was important not to discount clay too prematurely as a possible material for the project and to limit my options.

The decision was made to experiment with various techniques as slip casting, press mold, raku, mid firing to high, colour application and various clay bodies (Fig. 23). The outcome from the test did not culminate in anything convincing. The ceramic fragments of the human form were still unresponsive and almost mute.



Figure 23: Evan Williams, ceramic test pieces, 2009

The other materials trialed were glass, muslin, papier mache and latex. I first tested the muslin. In order for the muslin to hold its shape it was necessary to add an adhesive, transforming the fluid fabric into an inflexible form (Fig. 24).



Figure 24: Evan Williams, muslin test piece, 2009

In addition to the rigidity the stiffened muslin also took on the appearance of a veil draped over the human body, giving it an ethereal macabre element (Fig. 25).



Figure 25: Evan Williams, muslin test piece, 2009

The second material tested was glass. Here I used a technique called slumping or bending. This is a process of melting glass into or over a mold in a kiln. The temperature to slump glass can range from 1200 to 1400 degrees Fahrenheit (Brown, 2010). Once the test glass was removed from the mold it maintained the characteristics of the human form but there was no appearance of the organic texture of skin. I have discussed previously how necessary it is to the project to have material that can convey some semblance to the human form and its surface and glass did not achieve this (Fig. 26).



Figure 26: Evan Williams, slumping glass test piece, 2009

Originally there was an attraction to papier mache because of the resemblance to a discarded insect husk with that crisp fragile texture that recalls the skin it once was. There is an ephemeral nature to the fragments; one touch and the pieces will degenerate (Fig. 27).



Figure 27: Evan Williams, untitled 5, 2009, papier mâché test piece, dimensions variable.

My assessment of papier mache changed during the exploration of potential resolutions to present the project. When the body parts were scattered in various sites it had become visually ordinary: easily ignored and dismissed as rubbish (Fig. 28). Furthermore it was difficult to discern any human attributes amongst the fragment.



Figure 28: Evan Williams, mock presentation 1, papier mâché, 2009



Figure 29: Evan Williams, mock presentation 2, papier mâché, 2009

I wanted some ambiguity in the forms I was creating; however the human features in the papier mâché tests are too hard to distinguish or to identify as human (Fig. 29). There were two positive and conclusive results coming from the experimenting with papier-mâché: the investigation of probable alternatives in the actual form of



presentation of the project and the inspiration for the notion of multiple physical changes as a core issue in understanding body image. The three materials tested shared similar rigid unapproachable qualities as clay. They had lost their human presence.

Shelley Wilson's installation *Female Puberty and a Search for an Identity* (1998) (Fig. 11) was the work that most influenced my idea to record physical change. Although Wilson's installation concentrates on similar concepts, visually our approaches are quite distinct. Wilson's style is akin to my former plan to document partial elements of physical change and the individuals who suffer from poor body image. I have expanded on the imagery conveyed by Wilson in *Female Puberty*, depicting those who suffer poor perception of self and feel the need to alter their physical appearance, showing that it can be an interminable process through the production of multiple hyper-real human fragments that accumulate in a space.

My first impression of latex was that it was too flexible; in tests it lost its visual impact on larger body parts, but I had chosen latex because of the likeness it has to skin with its flaccid texture (Fig. 30).



Figure 30: Evan Williams, latex test piece, dimensions variable, 2009

This assessment changed once I saw the latex draped over objects. It resembled displaced skin, the perfect material for what the project aims to communicate. The distorted human features of the latex are so captivating and inviting when you look



amongst the amassed fragments strewn across the floor. The randomly distributed hyper real human fragments have a subtle ambiguity. Unlike papier-mâché you are able to distinguish particular aspects of the human form. Latex is an ideal casting agent because of its pliability and its capacity to take precise impressions of the object.

In the eighties latex had become popular to craft fetish clothing. It was customarily worn to make the individual feel appealing and seductive. It was an escape from the mainstream clothing normally worn. Because of its skin-tight adhesion, latex clothing has the ability to conceal any physical anomalies giving the wearer an added confidence. In addition to concealment the second skin can overstate the curves of the human figure making one's self more alluring for any viewer: a second skin.

Wearing latex clothing is a harmless process to alter your outward appearance in contrast to cosmetic surgery. There is a correlation between why I have chosen latex for this particular project and why it is popular material used to make seductive garments. The imperfect skin is torn off or camouflaged with a new layer always in the hope this will negate any abnormalities while projecting confidence.

When I am confronted with my hyper real skin I liken it to the curiosity of coming across an insect husk or an animal hide: There is certain inquisitiveness that makes me want to reach out and touch them but there is also some trepidation. The tactile response to the latex I find quite uncomfortable: more so when it imitates the human skin.

The hyper real fragments have a peaceful enticing quality when spread thinly across the space. This is reinforced by reducing the application of latex in the mold; transforming the fragments into an intimate imitation of skin.

Additionally, the fragments are all in various layers to break the uniformity so that they do not become insipid, suffering sameness. In contrast to the tranquil arrangement of single layers of latex, the congested areas conjure up an intense presence. Both degrees of accumulation are metaphors that define how content I am with my outward appearance. The sections with minimal fragments indicate signs of contentment with my physical exterior; a representation of periods in my life when it was not necessary to alter my appearance. The accumulated is the antithesis of the former, signifying the incessant remaking (Fig. 31).



Figure 31: Evan Williams, mock presentation 3, latex fragment, 2010

I am using the procedure of plaster casting (Fig. 32). By using this technique of plaster casting it allows me work with the human body. The latex impressions of the human figure I find a more intimate scale to engage with.



Figure 32: Evan Williams, plaster casting, 2009

I feel this is important particularly when employing the human body as subject matter to convey social issues as body image, identity and perfection. This has been a scale I have always found comfortable to work in when I work three dimensionally.

The presentation of the fragments was important to the installation on account of the various themes I am illustrating: relentless change, volume and satisfaction/discomfort with your outward appearance. I needed to fabricate the illusion of volume and be mindful not to be too cautious with the quantity and contradict the notion of constant physical change. The first alternative was to incorporate plinths in various scales to drape the latex (Fig. 33).



Figure 33: Evan Williams, mock presentation 4, latex fragments, 2010

The outcome did not prove positive. Displaying the fragments over the plinths weakened the space and a distraction. There was also no discernable relevance to the installation having plinths incorporated into the space.

I resolved the problem of creating the false appearance of volume by the construction of a number of armatures in an assortment of materials, shapes and sizes that are concealed with the latex fragments (Fig. 34).



Figure 34: Evan Williams, armatures, 2010

The distribution of material was further explored in a marquette, where it became more random and less contrived. (Fig 35).



Figure 35: Material exploration: Marquette 2010 (detail)

Within the space I have manipulated the lighting to establish a neutral ambiance. I felt by controlling the lights' radiance it would elicit either a positive or negative undertone from the space, causing a distraction to the installation. It would add another element that I did not feel was relevant to the installation. It was never about the dynamics of light, dark or shadow but about a visual passivity. In addition there are no specific areas of the installation that the viewer should be directing their focus on so I have set up the lights to bathe the space evenly. If concentrating on particular regions of the space with lighting it would denote that the material space was considerably more of substance in contrast with lighting that suggested little dynamic ambiance.

Space and the object within installation are paramount to the final body of work. My objective is having both to complement one another. I have embraced certain aspects of space and object employed by Orly Genger (Fig. 36). Regrettably I am only familiar with Genger's sculptures through photographs so the experience is only superficial, or at least a different way of seeing it.



Figure 36: Orly Genger, *Big Boss*, 2009, rope and latex paint, dimensions variable.

To interact with Genger's sculptures would have an overwhelming affect on my perception, being immersed within the installation and the space it occupies. The experience would be unavoidable because the installations appear to occupy and obstruct the space. I share a similar goal as Genger in the reshaping of space through the merging of the installation that actively engages with the viewer.

Honigman wrote, 'If you take any object in the world and fill a space with it, you will most likely create an engaging space' (Honigman, 2010). Initially I was intending to take a similar approach to Genger's synthesis of space and installation to assist interactive experience. I wanted the viewer to enter the space and be overwhelmed by the sheer volume of fragments amassed. There is so much material it is difficult not walking on the hyper-real fragments.

It is no longer essential for the viewer to have that close intimate contact within the space of the installation (Fig. 37). It made rational sense to refine and restrict viewer interaction.

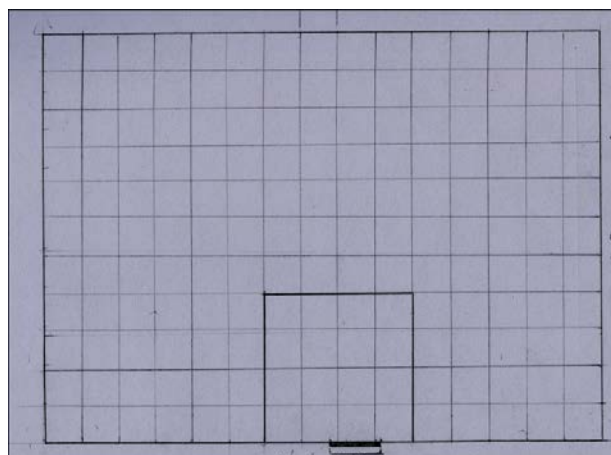


Figure 37: Evan Williams, top view of installation space, 4m x 4m, within gallery 2010.

At no time would I permit either a sibling or peer to intrude into my sanctuary (home) and bare witness to the extreme processes I have undergone to attain physical perfection. The barriers I put up are reflected in the design of the installation space (Fig. 38).

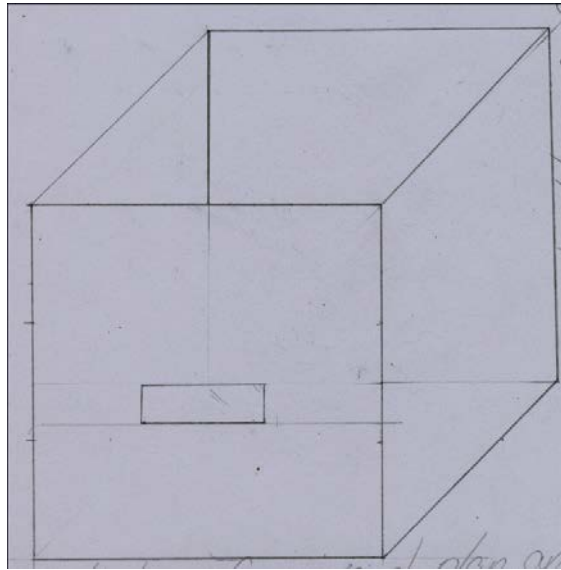


Figure 38: Evan Williams, installation space from front, 2010, 4m x 4m x 2.9 m (h).

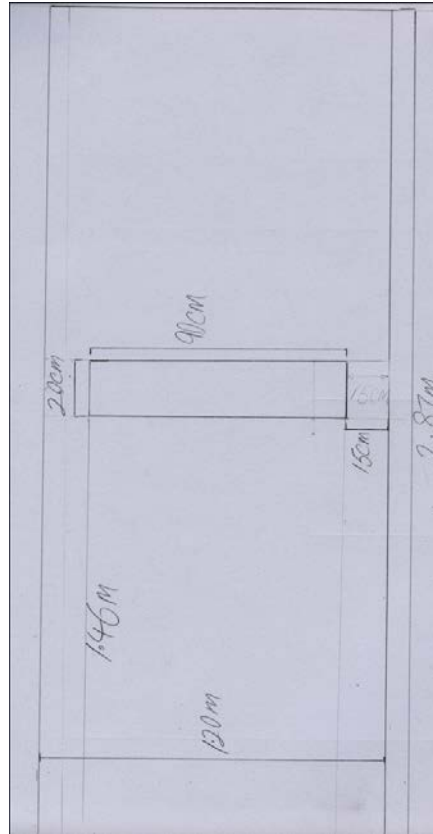


Figure 39: Evan Williams, viewing panel into installation space, 2010, 2.9 m x 1.2 m.

The only means of discovering hidden truths of my life is to secretly view from the outside. The viewer now observes from the outside world through a glass panel becoming a voyeuristic experience: peering into my private world (Fig. 39).

I have never really fathomed the notion of the installation or question the rationale why the method is practiced until reading David Green's theories in *Soapbox*. In order to comprehend why I have chosen this particular direction for the project I felt it was essential to have some insight into the practice. Green argued that for an installation to achieve a positive outcome space and object should become one single entity. He reasoned that the object (sculpture) is only truly appreciated when it is erected in a particular space. Furthermore the installation should be viewed as site specific: 'The work cannot exist without its location' (Carroli and Holubizky, 1999, p.13).

Wolfgang Max Faust describes the process as the 'spatial context' where the objects form a connection to the extrinsic world (Carroli and Holubizky, 1999, p.13).



I found that the installation was poignantly evocative in an enclosed fabricated space in contrast to the space being accessible to the public. By having the installation exposed, I relinquish the intimate privacy I am evoking.

This is my personal space that is a highly contained, clinical and conservative environment, but through the merging of the hyper-real body parts I believe it is now been transformed into space that exemplifies self (Fig. 40).



Figure 40: *The Body: The Illusion of Perfection*, 2010, latex, dimensions variable (detail)

Stephen Willats puts forward a similar argument in *Beyond the Plan: The Transformation of Personal Space in Housing* (2001). Willats stated that our personal space is an expression of ourselves whilst dwelling in structures that have strictures imposed on us by architects and planners. The exterior (walls) is inconsequential however within the confines it becomes the individual's personal space. He continues on to suggest that space defines the individual through the integration of person objects.

By adapting to the restrictions Willats saw it as '... personal empowerment', to break the confines and give the space an identity (Willats, 2001, 49). The space symbolizes the home that I have adorned with objects (fragments) to emulate my character.

The installation has neither object nor material integrated into the space aside from the latex fragments. I felt it would become too busy, distracting and encumbering viewer's interaction, even if the objects are directly applicable to body image and



image of the body. By merging other symbols of physical change I felt it would cease to have an unambiguous dialogue that I desire. The installation needs to elicit an overwhelming response but with no distractions from the image of the body, and body image.

## CONCLUSION

Ideals that relate to body image and image of the body as forms of perfection are all encompassing and unyielding in contemporary Western culture, no matter how passionate is my conviction that I should try to ignore this doctrine.

Because I am of Asian descent there may be drawn links in my work to that of photographer William Yang (for example the *Old new borrowed blue* series, 2001), photographer/film-maker Tony Ayres, who worked with Yang on *Sadness* (1999) and Owen Leong, whose work in photography and video, such as the 2010 project, *Birthmark*, deals with physical transformation and transcendence (Leong, 2007). These artists are all Asian Australian. They have all worked with the image of the body, placing Eastern bodies, often their own, in a variety of Western contexts focusing on such themes as lineage, ethnicity, heritage, sexuality and gender. There is a precondition in their work that the body is “Asian”. By comparison, having been early adopted and raised in the West, my own Asian heritage does not play a significant part in this project as my image of the body has been formed through my sustained Western experience.

I have reached a conclusion regarding my relationship to my idea of body image. It is a hopeless act to try and quash the propaganda. These are principles so interwoven into contemporary culture it is too difficult to evade. The idea of the perfect body and a positive body image remain subjects that invariably play a role in Western society. But the desire is here to stay and will never desist, although the idea of perfection itself may change with fashion and time. But there is a choice to comply or ignore these ideals. To make that choice it is imperative to realize it is no longer necessary to present yourself as a duplicate, a mirror image, of this physical archetype.

In the process of making my artwork I have asked why is there this strong desire to duplicate through our physical exteriors the ever-changing principles of body image and image of the body? To alter my outward appearance can be an acceptable practice however there are individuals who go to the extremes, falling into cosmetic surgery addiction, body dysmorphia, and over-zealous dieting. In this sense, my work relates to that of French artist, Orlan, with her endless performative pursuit of physical perfection in projects such as *The Digital Bride of Frankenstein* (1990) and *Omnipresence* (1993) (Orlan, 2011).

There is first the assumption and the belief it is mandatory to pursue the classical Greek principles of body image and image of the body. There is a presumption that if to try to achieve these unattainable goals they will be rewarded with the ultimate prize: a sense of belonging and of feeling accepted. Regrettably I have chosen to yield to these principles. I am forever trying to mirror the myth of the perfect body type. The endless reconstructions I have undergone to change my outward appearance is my attempt to be embraced by the flock. The mindset will never desist until I break the cycle that generates it.

This project is the total embodiment of the unrelenting physical alterations I have submitted to over many years. The continual tearing of the skin, the anticipation that the next layer will be more accommodating. It never is, though. Always, I will discover another physical imperfection that needs to be removed.

'The Body: The Illusion of Perfection' is an installation that gives the viewer an opportunity to take a glimpse into my private world that is my pursuit of the classical Greek archetype, and the incessant reconstructions I have endured in my attempt to be accepted into the norm. The installation suggests the illusion of multiple physical changes and how unremitting this changing can be. My aspiration is to put a halt to these multiple sheddings, to have a space devoid of fragments, to be whole, and the antithesis of my former self. I want to realize it is no longer necessary to continually replicate one's self in the search for perfection.

My life is private and the only means the viewer can recognize the true consequences of the myth of body image and image of the body is by becoming a voyeur; by peering in from the exterior world. The only access to my world is through a narrow glass panel: glass that may reflect the viewer; that forms a barrier to touch;

and is also transparent and revealing. By restricting viewer interaction to the space I have created a sense of my own privacy, while hoping the viewer will be more empathetic to what the installation is communicating. In doing so, I have revealed a private act to the public.

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**APPENDIX**  
**Exhibition Documentation**  
**Academy Gallery**



I had envisaged the installation as an enclosed space to be sited in the very centre of the gallery. I felt this created a sense of balance between the installation and the surrounding space. Through various visual investigations of the all-encompassing around the enclosure I recognised that it was superfluous to the installation itself. There was nothing of significance for the viewer to scrutinize outside the contrived setting; it was what I had contained within the enclosure that was essential to the present project. I decided to take advantage of a glass window in the gallery wall and constructed the enclosure around that.

I removed the generic gallery grey floors within the enclosure by painting these white to match the walls, thereby creating continuity within the confined space. In addition to that decision I believe that by having the interior entirely white it conveyed a neutral, unblemished environment with no distractions. I also trialed black for the interior but this was less effective as the fragments became indistinct.

Initially I had wanted the observer to enter and become immersed within the installation. I assumed that I could evoke a more compassionate reaction through initiating intimate interaction with the hyper-real fragments. Ironically by doing this, the installation lost its private experience of intimacy.

Personally I would never overtly perform or flaunt the act of shedding one's own skin, so it was necessary to make the viewer a voyeur in order to facilitate a means of making my private world visible. I achieved this by restricting public access to the installation to only a small viewing panel created by making use of the gallery window. This gave the desired voyeuristic experience. I also realized that having

the public physically enter and engage with the environment would contaminate the white clinical space, so no access was available to the work from within the gallery itself.

I rejected all forms of spotlighting that may have created any semblance of ambience or narrative, in favour of a flat natural light that further emphasised the neutrality of the space. Bathing the installation with impassive lighting also empathised there was no focus on a specific area and that every fragment of the hyper-real skin was equally important.

I believe all the changes the project underwent to achieve the final outcome were essential. If I had simply proceeded with the original plan I believe the project would not have succeeded. Previous plans did not help to visually resolve the project. Furthermore, successive models provided various distractions that diverted the viewer's attention away from the installation. Ultimately I have created a space that was undemanding with nothing to redirect the attention of the viewer. The key component was the small viewing panel which restricted access to the space. This allowed me to fabricate the illusion of private intimacy necessary to convey a sense of physical change



*The body: the illusion of perfection, exterior of viewing panel, 2010*



*The body: the illusion of perfection*, installation viewed through the panel, 2010



*The body: the illusion of perfection*, installation viewed from within the space, 2010



*The body: the illusion of perfection*, installation viewed from above within the space, 2011